

**THE VIRTUES OF POSTMODERNISM ELECTRIFIED WITH  
THE USE OF THE SIX REALMS OF MEANING AND  
STRATEGIC PLANNING**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this article is to examine how Postmodernism and the *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* (2007) by Dr. William Kritsonis can be implemented in our schools with strategic planning. The six realms of meanings are symbolics, empirics, esthetics, synnoetics, ethics, and synoptics. Postmodernism's primary significance is its power to account for vast changes in our society, cultures, education and economy as we move from a production to a consumption society. Postmodernism has captured interest because it involves a stunning critique of modernism.

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### **Introduction**

In today's world Postmodernism can be viewed as a response to the preceding modernist movement wherein modernism simply reacts against classical concepts. Postmodernism is not just a philosophical movement. Postmodernism is found in architecture, the graphic arts, dance, music, literature, and literary theory. As a general cultural phenomenon, it has such features as the challenging of convention, the mixing of styles, tolerance of ambiguity, the emphasis on diversity, acceptance of innovation and change, and stress on the contractedness' of reality. Postmodernism is often seen by its proponents as bringing an end to metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, and so forth, on the grounds that these types of discourse assume a fixed, universal reality and method of inquiry. Strategic planning is a powerful tool to provide a focus for the key areas that an organization or institution must do in the future. Strategic planning must be able to add value to the activities of the organization or institution.

### **Purpose of the Article**

The purpose of this article is to discuss how postmodernism and the realms of meaning concepts can be implemented in students learning with the use of strategic planning. It will explore *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* (2007) by Dr. William A. Kritsonis and postmodern challenges according to Dr. Fenwick W. English. The emphasis will be on exploring postmodern views with the use of symbolics, empirics, esthetics, synnoetics, ethics, and synoptics.

### **In the Eyes of Postmodernism**

The main word when trying to understand postmodern education is constructivism. Constructivism is the main underlying learning theory in postmodern views on education. The basic idea is that all knowledge is invented or "constructed" in the minds of people. Knowledge is not discovered as modernists would claim. In other words, the ideas teachers teach and students learn do not correspond to "reality;" they are merely human constructions. Knowledge, ideas and language are created by people, not because they are "true," but rather because they are useful.

Postmodern perspectives, terms, and assumptions have penetrated the core of American culture over the past decades. Postmodernism's primary significance is its power to account for and reflect vast changes in our society, cultures, education and economy as we move from a production to a consumption society. Postmodernism has captured our interest because it involves a stunning critique of modernism, the foundation upon which our thinking and our institutions have rested. Today, postmodernist schools of higher learning are increasingly viewed as inadequate, pernicious, and costly. Postmodernists attack the validity and legitimacy of the most basic assumptions of modernism. Because higher education is quintessentially a modern institution, attacks on modernism are attacks on the higher education system as it is now constituted.

Postmodernism has become the orthodoxy in educational theory, particularly in feminist educational theory. It heralds the end of grand theories like Marxism and liberalism, scorning any notion of a united feminist challenge to patriarchy, of united anti-racist struggle and of united working-class movements against capitalist exploitation and oppression. In essence, the concept of postmodernism is that there is a logical historical connection with existentialism which essentially brought to light in literature and philosophy a realization of the meaningfulness of modern life.

The postmodern take on things is that all 'certain' meaning which can be proposed from history, or science or other methods of knowledge, can be shown to not be 'certain', but instead to have come about through the biased construction of certain individuals, groups, governments, and educational institutions. Postmodern may seem scary to people who feel like their sense of certainty is built on concrete, but philosophically that may turn into a different assumption. Few people are able to retain a high level of consciousness in postmodern thinking because it is not paired with a strength of will for constructing new meaning that goes beyond the corrosive power of postmodernism. Postmodernism challenges modernist dependency on reason, uniformity, and grand theories (meta-narratives), which provide umbrella explanations of phenomena and events. Postmodernism questions the progression towards certainty and clear unambiguous reasoning. It welcomes diversity, variety, multiple interpretations of phenomena and multiple strategies.

### **Implementing the Realms with Postmodernism Strategies**

The first realm, symbolics, “comprises ordinary language, mathematics and various types of nondiscursive symbolic forms, such as gestures, rituals, rhythmic patterns, and the like. These meanings are contained in arbitrary symbolic structures, with socially accepted rules of formation and transformation” (Kritsonis, 2007, p.11). Ordinary language uses communication, everyday speech, writing and knowledge. “In the postmodernism world true language is more concerned with power because this theory embraces both the structure of its language, and its ability to describe things in order to communicate and influence others” (English, 2003, p. 15)

In examining language, the postmodernist rationality towards “meaning” and the realms of symbolics have integral patterns. The postmodernist example would be a red cloud that has no particular meaning in weather systems; however, a red traffic signal does have a specific meaning within communication. “Red meaning stop is purely contained within that notational communication system” (English, 2003, p. 16). In educational standards, both Kritsonis (2007) and English (2003) have common grounds to confer that in some cases language can be theoretical.

Empirics, the second realm, includes the “science of physical world, of living things, and of man. It provides factual descriptions, generalizations, and theoretical formulations and explanations that are based upon observation and experimentation in the world of matter, life, mind and society” (Kritsonis, 2007, p. 12). Science is concerned with matters of fact, different abstractions and assessments. In postmodernism, “science is simply a language game, a set of rules governed by linguistic habits that use non-

scientific metanarratives to justify and legitimize larger social context”(English, 2003, p. 13).

A postmodernist prospective is that science in education has to be real, especially in finding the theoretical framework which grasps students to fully comprehend in-depth science and its real meaning. Therefore, administrators should be able to use lessons which are strategically planned to incorporate the models of postmodernist and empirics to replace the metaphor dominant in education to vocally train those teachers to be effective individuals that will allow demands to take precedence over actions that requires improving the educational productivity of students.

The third realm, esthetics, contains “the various arts, such as music, the visual arts, the arts of movement, and literature” (Kritsonis 2007, p.12). In this realm, meanings “are concerned with the contemplative perception of particular significant things as unique objectifications of ideated subjectivities” (Kritsonis 2007, p. 12). Teaching music offers many classes of satisfaction to students as well as adults. Usually a teacher can work with learners of all cultures and ages experience the thrill of sharing thoughts and feelings with others and seeing others learn is so important in esthetics. Esthetics can help educators and administrators expose those children who are not able to grasp things easily; but, with the use of visual art, movements and music then the patterns of sounds or art will be better able to direct them with a better foundation of comprehension.

The postmodernist view is that “leaders in schools must envision “actors” who occupy organizations and engage in social processes” (English, 2003, p. 28). In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, educational administrators will have to use strategic planning to change their leadership style in order to have schools shift to a positive sense of value that will impact significant school improvement and the perceptions that teach children the arts will help them achieve a well rounded education.

Synnoetics, the fourth realm, examines and embraces what Michael Polanyi calls “personal knowledge” and Martin Buber the “I-Thou” relation” Synnoetics signifies “relational insight” or direct awareness” (Kritsonis 2007, p. 12). Personal or relational knowledge is concrete, direct, and existential. In examining the knowledge strategies of school administrators and teachers in schools to acquire and use information for decision making in various areas of school development, emphasis on personal knowledge strategies of school administrators and teachers are highly correlated to the perception of positive knowledge for safer environments in the school systems. It is quantifiable and supremely to state that personal strategies also tend to influence the knowledge culture within schools. School administrators and leaders can center personal strategies that can maneuver the way students and staff seeks and tolerates new knowledge, and how ideas are valued and used. Educational administrators and leaders should establish higher levels of personal knowledge strategies which will also likely result in a stronger belief in the quality process of decision making in schools. The knowledge strategies are not an exhaustive list, but school leaders need to cultivate competent knowledge strategies amongst their staff members to consolidate the knowledge culture in schools. According to English, the state’s role in education has evolved slowly since the nineteenth century. At that time, state involvement in education focused on creating local districts, academic requirements and compulsory education. It is evidently a pattern that administrators should critically identify the need to actively create a school environment that enables teachers to actively and intensively utilize the information to create new knowledge and enhance the knowledge and information culture in their schools. (2003, p. 28)

Ethics, the fifth realm of meaning, “includes moral meanings that express obligation rather than fact, perceptual form, or wariness of relation” (Kritsonis, 2007, p. 13). Ethics “is a code of values to guide man’s choices and actions, the choices and actions that determine the purpose and the course of life” (Rand, 1964, p. 13). Right and wrong are deliberate actions and moral choices made by an individual have “both personal and impersonal elements” (Kritsonis, 2007, p. 438). Kritsonis believes that ethics is everyone’s business. English looks at the school administrator as an “educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development and stewardship of a vision” (2003, p. 103). Rand alludes to ethics as a “code which is based on and derived from a metaphysics that is from a theory about the fundamental nature of the universe in which man lives and acts” (1964, p. 55).

In examining the concept of ethics from the postmodernist view point, it is the education administrators’ responsibility to ensure that the rationality as it relates to ethics should be integrated within the educational system. It is only agreeable that educational leaders should promote the success of all students in an ethical manner and collaborate with families and community members. On the surface, it appears that educational administrators should ensure a measureable value to the humanistic orientation and the rhetoric of education in making the elicit responses ranging from doing things right.

Synoptics, the sixth realm of meaning, refers to “meanings that are comprehensively integrative” (Kritsonis, 2007, p. 130). In the synoptics realm, history, religion, and philosophy can be an overall learning plan for student academic achievement and success.

Educational administrators and leaders must expand learning for students in the synoptic realm, as this will challenge their students to read and study more in-depth philosophy, religion, and history as it affect their world. Bloom’ taxonomy can also be used by administrator and leaders as a foundation of the principle in focusing on the fundamental disciplines in education. The postmodernist approach towards the educational leaders focuses on insisting that education is absolutely necessary in order to remain innovative and competitive in this increasingly global economy.

### **Strategic Planning and Postmodernism in Schools**

Postmodernism is dependent on objectivity and not on efficiency. Postmodernism is less easy to generalize across multiple settings. It is the responsibility of educational leaders to examine the cultural issues, resources, and other factors that may impinge on the planning process.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In conclusion, an integrated model based on strategic planning and the *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* (Kritsonis, 2007) and enhanced by postmodernistic ideas (English, 2003) can be utilized to solve the many challenges of our present day educational system. By utilizing and applying the strategies and framework set forth by both English and Kritsonis, it is evident that administrators will be able to structure a learning environment that should be integrated in a postmodernistic pattern.

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